

BOLD ALLIGATOR 2012

It's the biggest thing to hit the beaches of the East Coast in a decade – an amphibious military exercise involving the U.S. Navy, Marines and nine other nations. The mission: revive and hone what was once a core skill – sending Marines ashore to secure hostile territory. After a decade of ground wars, many Marines have never set foot on a ship, much less stormed a beach in a landing craft. But the need for a well-trained amphibious force hasn't gone away, military leaders say, pointing to 2010's earthquake relief mission in Haiti as just one example.

WHO

About 20,000 military personnel: U.S. sailors, Marines and Coast Guardsmen as well as participants or observers from Australia, Canada, France, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

Amphibious task force: Amphibious assault ship Wasp (flagship), amphibious assault ship Kearsarge, amphibious transport dock San Antonio, dock landing ship Oak Hill.

Landing force: 2nd Marine Expeditionary Brigade, 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit, Canadian and British Royal Marines, Marine Aircraft Group 29, Combat Logistics Regiment 25.

Amphibious ready group: Amphibious assault ship Iwo Jima, dock landing ship Gunston Hall, amphibious transport dock New York.

French amphibious assault ship Mistral

Escorts: Destroyer Mitscher; cruisers Anzio and Gettysburg.

Carrier strike group: Aircraft carrier Enterprise, cruiser Vicksburg, destroyers Porter, Nitze and James E. Williams, Carrier Air Wing 1.

Shipping: SS Wright (aviation logistics support ship), PFC Eugene A. Obregon (container and roll-on/roll-off ship).

Logistics: Fleet replenishment oilers John Lenthall and Laramie, dry cargo/ammunition ship Robert E. Peary.

Mine countermeasures: Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Units 1, 6, 12; Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit 2, Helicopter Mine Countermeasures Squadron 14 (MH-53 Sea Dragon helicopters), Coast Guard Cutter Staten Island, Canadian coastal defense vessels Summerside and Moncton.

Other units: Patrol and Reconnaissance Wing 11 (P-3 Orion anti-submarine warfare patrol aircraft) Riverine Squadron 2, Royal Netherlands Marine Corps boat detachment, maritime civil affairs and security teams, beach group, tactical air control group.

WHAT

The exercise is set in a mythical region known as the **Treasure Coast**, made up of two unstable nations, Amber and Amberland, and the neighboring country of Garnet, which is eager to expand its territory. When Garnet invades Amber, U.S. and allied forces must push the invaders out, while also dealing with a terrorist insurgent movement that has ties to Garnet and with pirates that are becoming increasingly active in the area.

The exercise has three major events: a sea-based aerial assault on Fort Pickett, an amphibious raid on Fort Story and an amphibious assault on Camp Lejeune.

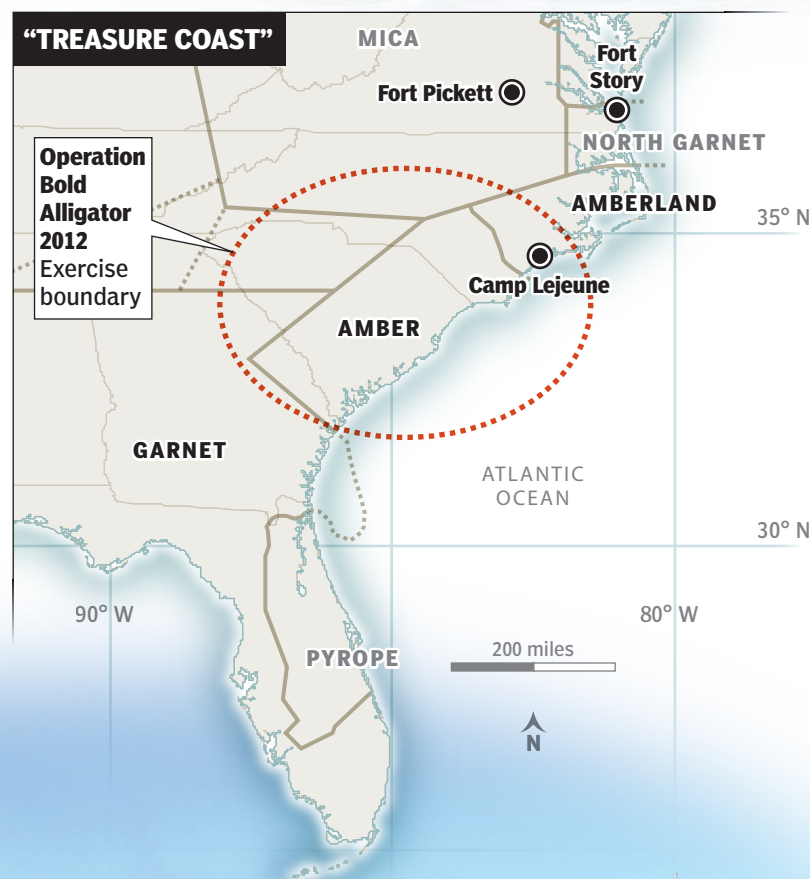
WHEN

The exercise began Jan. 30, and landings on Camp Lejeune and Fort Story are scheduled for today, weather permitting. Visit PilotOnline.com and see Tuesday's Virginian-Pilot for coverage. The exercise continues through Sunday.

For more information, visit <http://www.public.navy.mil/usff/ba12>

Kearsarge (LHD 3)

WHERE



PHOTOS: Kearsarge photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Jason Howard, LCAC photo by Seaman Jesse Monford.

SOURCES: U.S. Navy, ESRI, Tele Atlas, USGS

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